



**ROLLING HILLS
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

NEWS

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On Facebook, search for “Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative, Inc.” and like our page for continued updates, energy efficiency tips, cooperative news and outage updates.



FROM THE MANAGER

Rate Study Underway



Doug Jackson

This spring has been a busy time as the cooperative addresses the issues of COVID-19. The construction and maintenance crews have kept busy during the

mild, dryer winter months and office staff have been busy with many projects underway at this time.

Last August, the board discussed investment and maintenance costs. They discussed the declining margins as depreciation, interest, labor and property tax costs continue to increase. The board discussed various paths to move forward and determined the current path of

system investment and maintenance to improve reliability is the path to continue.

Because eroding margins threaten the cooperative’s financial stability, the board asked to research consultants for the purpose of preparing a rate study. This study would include a cost of service, revenue requirement and rate design for a projected implementation date of Sept. 1, 2020. On Dec. 20, 2019, a rate consultant was hired, and the study process began.

Over the past five years, Rolling Hills has made significant investment in your electrical system to improve service interruptions and maintain system integrity.

Below is a chart of values of the 5-year work orders included in plant for YTD 2019.

Over the past three years, Rolling Hills

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5-Year Work Orders Included in Plant for YTD 2019

| | |
|---|--------------|
| New lines built to members | \$2,600,000 |
| Tie lines to improve reliability | \$300,000 |
| Substation repairs and apparatus replacements | \$330,000 |
| Distribution transformer replacements | \$1,800,000 |
| New metering system | \$3,500,000 |
| Replacement of aged poles | \$11,500,000 |
| Transmission line rebuilds or replacement | \$3,250,000 |
| Conductor replacement | \$600,000 |
| Many minor projects, regulators, and controls | \$3,000,000 |
| Work-order total | \$26,880,000 |

A Well-Designed Landscape Can Save You Some Green

Thinking of planting trees in your yard this summer?

If the answer is yes, giving some thought about where to put them could help reduce your energy bill. Not only are trees beautiful, but shading is the most cost-effective way to reduce heat gain from the sun — a good thing in the summer.

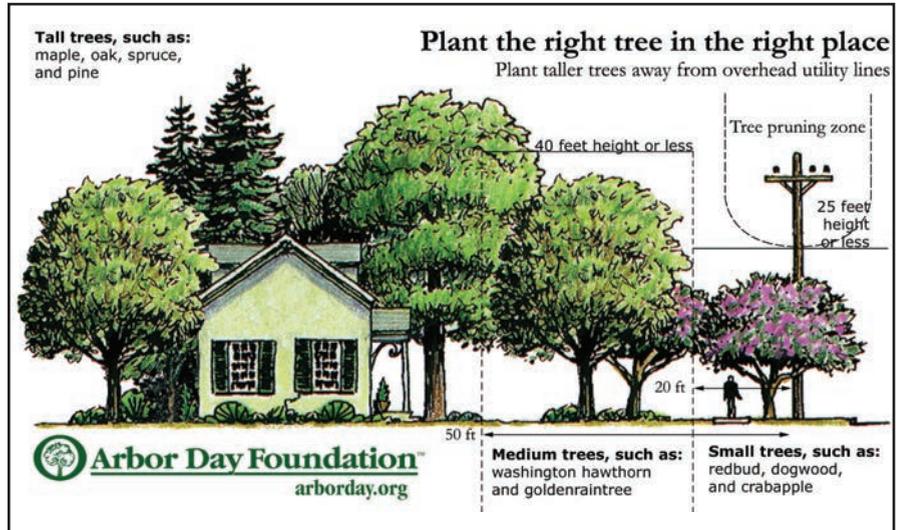
And the savings are nothing to sneeze at. According to the Department of Energy, a well-planned landscape can reduce an unshaded home's air conditioning costs by 15-50%. Our nation's energy authority also boasts that on average, a well-designed landscape saves enough energy to pay for itself in less than eight years.

Although effective, shade-producing landscaping strategies vary by climate, here are some general planting guidelines from the Arbor Day Foundation:

- ▶ Plant on the west and northwest side of your home to provide mid- to late-afternoon shade.
- ▶ Use trees to shade east and west windows. If they block your view, prune lower branches.
- ▶ Plant shade trees over patios, driveways and air-conditioning units (but never crowd or block your A/C unit; it should have a 5-foot clearance above it and 3 feet on all sides).
- ▶ In general, large, deciduous trees planted on the east, west, and northwest sides of your home create shade in the summer and can help decrease the cost of running your air conditioner in the heat of the summer.

And what is deciduous, you ask?

Deciduous trees shed their leaves annually. Although it equates to a lot of leaves to rake come October, the annual



cycle lets the sunshine through in the winter but blocks the sun's rays in the summer. Either scenario helps reduce energy costs if trees are strategically placed in relation to your home.

Trees that don't shed leaves are called evergreens, which usually block the sun year-round. That's great in the summer but not so hot in the winter.

Consult a landscape professional for specific climate/region recommendations.

NOTE: When planting trees, be sure to consider height potential. Do not plant a tree that will mature to more than 15 feet tall near or under power lines. Taller-growing trees (taller than 15 feet at maturity) should be planted a minimum of 20 feet away from power lines, or much farther to avoid future pruning/power line issues.

For more information about planting the right tree in the right place or about electrical safety, go to SafeElectricity.org.

Rate Study Underway Continued from page 16A ▶

has also allocated an additional \$1 million to supplement the cooperative's right of way clearing program.

These significant system upgrades and maintenance programs are vital to maintain and improve system reliability. We are beginning to see positive results.

A new construction work plan is under consideration that will invest approximately \$25 million additionally over the next five to seven years. Each construction item is engineered, vetted, and properly considered before inclusion into the plan. The new

The new work plan is a continuation of our goal in providing our members a quality service using sound financial principles.

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More information concerning the rate adjustment will be printed in *Kansas County Living* magazine.

WATT'S HAPPENING

Keeping Everyone Safe & Healthy

Rolling Hills Electric wishes to thank you for helping our employees and fellow consumer-members stay safe and healthy these past few months. We know that closing our lobby may not have been convenient for some, but you obliged and used the dropbox or paid electronically. Questions and concerns were addressed by phone calls or electronically.

Things are beginning to return to somewhat normal. Employees who were requested to office from home returned to the office on May 4. Our lobby door opened to the public the middle of May and we continue to request social distancing for consumer-members, our line crews and office employees. None of us know at this time when or if procedures will be relaxed or reinstated. Our goal is to do the best we can to keep everyone safe and healthy.

Over the past few months, you have seen Rolling Hills introduce three new employees. We have had two retirements on our line crews and two employees leave. We are saddened when dedicated employees leave for whatever reason, but also excited to welcome new employees to the Rolling Hills Electric family.

By the time you receive this month's issue of *Kansas Country Living* magazine, wheat harvest will be underway or finished in some areas of our service territory. The equipment takes up a lot of the roadway so use patience when following or meeting the trucks, combines, tractors and other equipment. Also, if you are operating the equipment, be cautious of the

power lines. We do not want to see anyone injured or worse.

Our Facebook page is acquiring more followers weekly, which is great! It allows Rolling Hills to follow-up automated phone calls for planned outages, provide storm or other unplanned outage updates and safety information. Facebook is not monitored 24/7. If you have an outage, please report it by calling 785-534-1601 or 800-530-5572. It does take quite a few rings before the call reaches dispatch. If we are experiencing a large outage, you may experience a busy signal as all circuits may be busy.

If you have registered your account(s) on SmartHub and have an outage, check SmartHub. It will show if you are a known outage. If it shows that you have no power, it will not be necessary for you to report it. Once the outage is restored, SmartHub will update a few minutes later. If it has updated and you still don't have power, please call. You may be an isolated outage. The new metering technology and SmartHub have greatly benefited the consumer-members and Rolling Hills Electric.

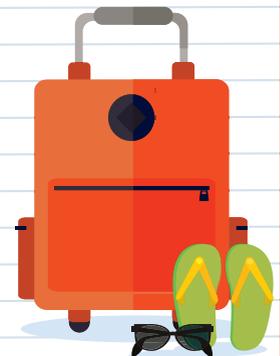
As always, if you should have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call or email me at 785-534-1601 or lbeebe@rollinghills.coop. Have a great Independence Day and July!



Linnea Beebe

5 easy ways to prepare your home for VACATION

1. Set or program your thermostat to 85 degrees while you are away.
2. Unplug small appliances and electronic devices, including gaming systems, so they don't draw power.
3. Adjust your water heater. For a natural gas water heater, turn it to low. For an electric version, turn it off at the circuit breaker.
4. Shut all your curtains and blinds.
5. Make sure your sump pump is working.



BEAT *the* PEAK

Conserve energy from 3-6 p.m. in June, July and August to save on your energy bill.

WHEN TO CALL IT



Between 2006 and 2018, 396 people were struck and killed by lightning in the U.S.

HAVE A GAME PLAN TO STAY SAFE WHEN SEVERE WEATHER STRIKES

1. Check weather forecasts in advance.
2. At first signs of stormy weather, seek shelter in a hard-top car or four-sided building.
3. Do not seek shelter under a pavilion or tree.
4. Do not sit on or lean against metal (e.g. bleachers, fencing).
5. Before resuming activities, **WAIT at least 30 MINUTES** after the last rumble of thunder.

SOURCE: NATIONAL LIGHTNING SAFETY COUNCIL

TOP SPORTS RELATED LIGHTNING FATALITIES

- #1 SOCCER | #2 GOLF
- #3 RUNNING | #4 BASEBALL
- #5 FOOTBALL | #6 DISC GOLF

DO NOT GET OUT

If your machinery, vehicle or other equipment makes contact with a power line, guy wire or electrical box, do not get out of your cab. Stray power could energize your equipment and the ground.

To avoid becoming electrocuted:

- ▶ Call 911 and wait for us to arrive to cut the power.
- ▶ Wait to exit your cab until the power is de-energized.

In rare cases you may need to exit your cab due to smoke or fire. If you must get out, make a solid jump out without touching any part of the tractor or vehicle, and hop away as far as you can, keeping both feet together as you hop.



HAPPY
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4TH OF JULY

★★★

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Our office will be closed on Friday, July 3.

Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Spending more time at home? Try an online energy audit to assess the overall efficiency of your home. Visit www.energystar.gov, then enter "home energy yardstick" in the search box to get started. **Source: energy.gov**